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‘Myriad of Names to Represent Her Nobleness’: The Church and the Mother of God in the Psalms and Hymns of Byzantium

Krastu Banev

Doctrines that do not lead us into prayer are not at the deepest level theological at all, for theology is about our relationship to God... As we seek to contemplate the glory of the Word made flesh, we kneel beside her whose willing assent made it possible.¹

The Virgin is the place of God, the shrine at which we worship – not her but the one born of her... Mary is, if you like, *theotopos* – 'place of God'! But in truth, she is more than that, she is θεοτοκος, the 'one who gave birth to God'. She is not just an edifice, an impersonal temple, in which God is found and worshipped; nor is she simply the ground that was fertilised, the fleece on which rain or dew fell (see Ps 71 [72]:6; Judg. 6:36-8) – she is not a passive instrument in God's hands; She is God's *partner* in the conception and birth of his Son.²

Andrew Louth

A. Introduction

These quotations from the work of Andrew Louth span some 35 years. Put side by side, they frame Louth's argument for an essential link between theology and prayer allowing us to perceive it as something central to his vision as a theologian. We see it developed in his 1977 essay on *Mary and the Mystery of the Incarnation* and then

¹ Andrew Louth, *Mary and the Mystery of the Incarnation: An Essay on the Mother of God in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Oxford: S.L.G. Press, 1977), p. 14, pp. 16–18.

² A. Louth, 'John of Damascus on the Mother of God as a Link between Humanity and God', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 153–61 (159).

again in his 2011 paper on the Virgin's role in the work of John Damascene. Here Louth interpreted the use of Old Testament typology by the Damascene as pointing to the Virgin not just as a 'place for God', a *theotopos*, but as an active *partner* with God in the divine economy. His analysis displays a marked affinity with the work of the Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky whose influence is visible already in Louth's 1977 essay. Where their ideas converge is precisely on the notion of human 'partnership' with God. In his study 'Panagia', for example, Lossky argued that 'the divine economy preparing the human condition for the Incarnation... is not a unilateral one'.³ For support for this weighty theological affirmation Lossky turned to the fourteenth-century Byzantine theologian Nicholas Cabasilas citing the following key passage from his homily *On the Annunciation*:

The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father and of his Virtue and his Spirit; it was also the work of the will and faith of the Virgin. Without the consent of the all pure one and the co-operation of her faith, his design would have been as unrealizable (α)μh/xanon h]n) as it would have been without the intervention of the three Divine Persons themselves.⁴

Connecting the points charted so far – in Louth's earliest and latest work and in those of the patristic and later Russian Orthodox writers on the Theotokos – we find ourselves under the unmistakable colours of a particular Christian vision focused on humanity's 'partnership' in the work of salvation. The human being whose life is uniquely suited to illustrate this partnership is the Virgin Mary with the active role she played at the Incarnation.

What I have to say in the pages that follow is also inspired by this vision of active or 'living theology'; I am happy to dedicate it to the *doyen* of Patristics at Durham, Andrew Louth, who first encouraged me to write on this topic, and whose fruitful academic career we celebrate with the present volume.

³ V. Lossky, 'Panagia' in E. L. Macall (ed.), *The Mother of God: A Symposium by Members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949), p. 30. See also his *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 141.

⁴ Ibid. Citation from Cabasilas, 'On the Annuntiation', 4. Greek text in M. Jugie, *Homélies mariales byzantines II. Patrologia Orientalis*, 19 (1925–1926), p. 488.

B. The Question of the Virgin's Transformations

New Testament writers describe the role of the Virgin Mary in a way which in its brevity is particularly significant for our discussion. In Luke's account she is given the ancillary role par excellence: the 'slave girl of the Lord' – *h9 dou/lh Kuri/ou* (Luke 1:38). The importance of this sketchy image of submission and obedience cannot be overstated as it contrasts so sharply with the image of action which she receives in the later Byzantine tradition. Here, the Virgin is not only a partner with God in the mystery of salvation, but a leader in her own right – the 'invincible general' or *u9pe/rmaxoj strathgo/j* – protecting the imperial capital itself. This association of the Virgin with the military defence of the empire continues right until the fall of the city to the Ottomans in 1453 (at which point it does not die, for it re-emerges later in the struggle for Greek national liberation).⁵ Risking an anachronistic comparison, we may say that for the Romans of Constantinople, and for their emperor, the Virgin provided a nuclear shield against every possible enemy. It is to her mighty protection (or *ske/ph*) that they turned in moments of great need.⁶ This faith in the Virgin's military power had a unique 'material' expression once the cult of relics became established in the capital. A tenth-century emperor, for example, sought the help of the Theotokos to fortify his defences by way of wrapping himself in her veil (or *w)mofo/rion*), which was kept in a special treasury in the imperial chapel

⁵ On the sixth century as a turning point in this development, see Averil Cameron, 'Theotokos in Sixth-century Constantinople', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 29 (1978), pp. 79–108. The vitality of the tradition is seen in the established custom to celebrate Greek independence day on the Feast of the Annunciation (25th March) in disregard of historical accounts of an earlier proclamation of the anti-Ottoman insurrection in Kalamata on 23 March 1821, see U. Öskırmılı and S. A. Sophos, *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 53. In Russia, the Byzantine belief in the Virgin's protection outlived even the communist revolution. On the legend of the Soviet Field-Marshal Zhukov carrying the icon of the Kazan Mother of God as the protector of soldiers in the Second World War, see K. E. Smith *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory During the Yeltsin Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 154.

⁶ On St Andrew the Fool's vision of the protecting veil in the Blachernae church, see his *Life* by Nicephorus, lines. 3722–58, in L. Rydén (ed. and tr.), *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1995), p. 254. On the related Feast of the Protection, see L. Cross, 'The Protevangelium of James in the Formulation of Eastern Christian Marian Theology', *Studia Patristica*, 40 (2006), pp. 380–92 (387).

at Blachernae. This took place just before a set of important peace negotiations with Symeon of Bulgaria (893–927) whose army was threatening the very survival of the empire. The historian who recorded the event in the late eleventh-century presented that this act of faith as part of the strategic military preparations before the mission.⁷ The Theotokos was joined in this effort by no less powerful an ally than Lazarus, Christ's friend raised from the dead, whose relics had been imported to aid the military operations against the Bulgarians.⁸ These examples illustrate the completion of a process whereby from her relatively humble beginnings in the New Testament Mary has been elevated in her capacity as 'Theotokos' and 'Mother of God' to become the heavenly protector, or *poliou=xo*j, of the City of Constantinople and by extension of all Christians.⁹ Recent scholarship has made it abundantly clear that a development of such magnitude can only be explained if a number of different factors are taken into account. Attempts to offer exclusive monocausal explanations are doomed to failure irrespectively of the brilliance of the insight they use, whether it is a theological, historical, or a psychoanalytical one. As Averil Cameron has argued, it is

⁷ John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, Emperor Romanos Lakapenos, section 12, ll. 20-26: *ο9 de\ Sumew_n a)postei/la j e0ne/prhse to\n th=j u9peragi/aj qeoto/kou nao\n to\n e0n th=| Phgh=|, o4n ο9 basileu\j 0Ioustiniano\j e0domh/sato, e0purpo/lhse kai\ ta_ ku/klw| su/mpanta, kai\ dh=loj h|n e0k tou/tou mh\ ei0rh/nhn a)ciw~n. ο9 de\ basileu\j e0n tw~| naw~| geno/menoj tw~n Blaxernw~n a#ma tw~| patria&rxh|, kai\ e0n th=| a(gi/a| sorw~| ei0selqw_n kai\ i9kethri/aj w)|da_j a)podou\j tw~| qew~, to\ w)moforion th=j qeoto/kou labw_n e0ch/|ei tou= naou=, o3ploij a)sfale/si frac&meno j, in J. Thurn (ed.) *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, CFHB 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), p. 219. Cited and discussed in B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pensilvania State University Press, 2006), p. 54, p. 211.*

⁸ See the discussion on Aretas of Caesarea's homilies 'On Lazarus' in T. Antonopoulou, 'Homiletic Activity in Constantinople around 900', in M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (eds), *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 317–48 (328–29).

⁹ The a-historical side of this ultimately successful development was brought to light by C. Mango, 'Constantinople as Theotokoupolis', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan/Athens: Skira Editore, 2000), pp. 17–25.

the 'sheer capaciousness of the theme of the Theotokos' that continues to fascinate scholars and to invite new approaches.¹⁰

In considering this vast topic – the 'wood with shady leaves under which many shelter' (in the words of the Akathistos: xai=re, cu/lon eu0skio/fullon, u9f' ou[ske/pontai polloi/)¹¹ – I need, firstly, to indicate where in the shade I wish to place my scholarly rug. The limits of this paper are set to examining the relationship between theology and worship in the Byzantine tradition. I will study this interaction in the case of hymns and homilies for the feasts of the Annunciation and the Dormition. To sharpen my focus, I will take as my guide Psalm 44[45] and examine aspects of continuity and change in its interpretation. It is well known that in the mature Byzantine tradition the 'queen' and 'daughter' spoken of in this psalm are taken as a reference to the Mother of God.¹² As we shall see, however, the earliest Christian commentators had preferred to see in the female figures in the psalm references to the church. Significant and well-studied¹³ developments in the fifth century led to a hermeneutical change whereby the typology of the psalm found a new addressee: Mary, the Theotokos, or 'God-bearer' – as the theological agreement emerging from the councils at Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) defined her, or the 'Mother of God' – as she became known especially after the end of the Iconoclast controversy (843).¹⁴ Summarising this development, Brian Daley has written that:

¹⁰ A. Cameron, 'Introduction', in L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham (eds), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, p. 3.

¹¹ *Akathistos*, Ikos 7 [N, lines 10–11], Greek text in L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 12. English translation by A. Ephrem Lash, <<http://www.anastasis.org.uk/akath.htm>> [accessed 24 October 2012].

¹² This is still the case in Orthodox worship, and in traditional Roman Catholic worship, where the verse is included in the liturgy for the Feast of the Dormition.

¹³ Summarized in Averil Cameron, 'The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-making', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Church and Mary* (Woodbridge/New York: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 1–21. See also her 'Introduction', in M. Vasilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 3–11.

¹⁴ I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became Meter Theou', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 44 (1990), pp. 165–72.

In the half century that followed the Council of Chalcedon, the figure of Mary emerged like a comet in Christian devotion and liturgical celebration throughout the world.¹⁵

In what follows I will aim to revisit the theme of Marian veneration in Byzantium by offering an argument for the re-evaluation of its scriptural basis. Examining the change of hermeneutical addressee – from Church of God to Mother of God – I will concentrate on two questions which in my view still await fuller elucidation. First is the speed with which the change took place in the fifth century, and second is the completeness and irreversibility of the process in later centuries. In other words, I will be asking, firstly, how fifth-century supporters of the Theotokos were able to establish such a vast scriptural support as they did in so short a space of time, and, secondly, why later Byzantine theologians appear so reticent about the earlier ecclesial layer of interpretation. In order to answer these two questions I will attempt a hypothetical reconstruction of a 'mechanism of orality',¹⁶ whereby through repetition and a particular way of dramatization, a set of scriptural titles and prefigurations – the 'myriad of names' in my title – came to be applied exclusively to the Mother of God.

I will begin with the later tradition and search for its sources in the formative centuries of Byzantine Christianity examining a selection of hymns and their basis in earlier homilies – the 'psalms and hymns' signalled in my title.¹⁷ Using as my guide Psalm 44[45], I will study aspects of continuity and change in its interpretations offered in the fifth, the eighth and the fourteenth century – periods which I broadly define 'early', 'middle' and 'late' Byzantine tradition respectively. This diachronic investigation will provide the basis for an explanation of both the initial gathering of speed and the eventual irreversibility of the development of Marian veneration. In this

¹⁵ B. Daley, 'Introduction', in his *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, N.Y: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), p. 6.

¹⁶ Here I develop the definition given in the entry on 'Oral Poetry' in R. A. Greene et al. (eds), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 979: 'Perhaps the most significant mechanism of orality is repetition – from sounds and words to verses, passages, and, in epic and ballad, narrative patterns'.

¹⁷ The phrase echoes Paul's exhortation in Eph. 5.19 and features in the Byzantine rite as an opening line to one of the hymns during Great Vespers on the eight tone. *Paraklhtikh*/ (Athens: Fos, 1987), p. 406.

context, I will argue for the key role played by dramatized exegesis in both hymns and homilies in securing the acceptance of new elements in the tradition.

A. I. The Mature Byzantine Tradition

We begin with the late Byzantine tradition, where the positions we are examining have reached their mature state. The fourteenth-century statesman and theologian Nicholas Cabasilas, has left us an eloquent account of the rationale behind the exalted theological status of the Virgin.¹⁸ From a vast list of possible sources from the mature tradition, I choose to focus on him because of the particular way he uses the psalms to support his view of the Mother of God. In a set of homilies for the main feasts of the Theotokos, Cabasilas presented her as the 'fruit of all of God's creation'. Just as every tree exists to bear fruit and is known by its fruit, so, Cabasilas argued, the world was created in order for the Virgin to be born and Christ incarnate from her.¹⁹ We note that Cabasilas' key phrase is in fact a direct quotation from the psalms: 'The earth shall be filled by the fruit of your labour (Ps. 103[104]:13, LXX). The interpretation he offered was that Mary should be seen as the person spoken of in the psalm: it is her labour as Mother of God which will give birth to Christ, the divine fruit who will satisfy the hunger and thirst of all who inhabit the earth.

Cabasilas' way of reading the psalms was the established practice in the fourteenth-century. We see it also in Gregory Palamas who used the psalms, and in particular psalm 44[45] to support his teaching on the Mother of God. As he explained in his homily the Dormition, she was the 'queen' foretold by the prophet David:

Today she has moved from earth to heaven, and now has heaven too
as a fitting dwelling-place, a palace meet for her. She has stood on the

¹⁸ Biographical information and discussion of sources, in Y. Spiteris and C. G. Conticello, 'Nicola Cabasilas Chamaetos', in C. G. Conticello and V. Conticello (eds), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 315–410. For a theological analysis with a view to the continuation of the hesychast tradition in twentieth-century Orthodoxy, see Ioan I. Ica, *Maica Domnului in teologia secolului XX si in spiritualitatea isihasta a secolului XIV: Grigorie Palama, Nicolae Cabasila, Teofan al Niceei* (Sibiu: Deisis, 2008).

¹⁹ Cabasilas, 'On the Dormition', 3. In M. Jugie, *Homélies mariales byzantines II. Patrologia Orientalis*, 19 (1925–1926), p. 497.

right hand of the King of all, clothed in vesture wrought with gold, and arrayed in divers colours, as the Psalmist and Prophet says of her; and you should take this garment interwoven with gold to mean her divinely radiant body adorned with every type of virtue. For at present she is the only one who has a place in heaven with her divinely glorified body in the company of her Son.²⁰

In Palamas' understanding, the chief value of the psalm is its prophetic prefiguration. His interpretation serves as a good example of the difference between pre-modern and modern exegesis: for the latter, the hermeneutical emphasis is to be placed on a reconstructed original context in which the verse's main import is as part of a wedding song, 'a joyous celebration of new life and human sexuality'.²¹ For Palamas, however, the key verse 'The queen stood at your right hand' refers to the special status of the mother of the messianic King of All. In particular, he sees it as pointing to Mary's exaltation after her death: adorned with every virtue as the perfect hesychast, she is now standing in the place of highest honour to the right hand of the King of All.²²

These two examples from Cabasilas and Palamas illustrate the point that in the mature Byzantine tradition the exalted place of the Mother of God was a normative

²⁰ Palamas, 'On the Dormition', *Homily* 37.8: ἀποὺ γῆ= metane/sth sh/meron, kai\ e0k deciw~n pare/sth tou= pambasile/wj e0n i9matismw~| diaxru/sw| peribebhlme/nh pepoikilme/nh, kata_ to\ ei0rhme/non tw~| yalmw|dw~| profh/th| peri\ au0th=j. 9Imatismo\n de\ noh/seij dia&xruson to\ qeauge\j e0kei/nhj sw~ma, pepoikilme/non tai=j pantodapai=j a)retai=j. In P. K. Chrestou (ed.), *Grhgori/ou tou= Palama~ a#panta ta elrga*, vol. 10, in the series 3Ellhnej Pate/rej th=j 0Ekklhsi/aj, 76 (Thessalonica: Paterikai\ 0Ekdo/seij Grhgo/rioj o9 Palama~j, 1985). English translation in *Gregory Palamas, Mary the Mother of God: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, trans. by Christopher Veniamin (South Canaan, PA: Mount Thabor, 2005), p. 73. References to psalm 44[45] are found throughout the homilies.

²¹ R. E. Van Harn, W. Brueggemann and B. A. Strawn, *Psalms for Preaching and Worship: A Lectionary Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 156–57.

²² For Palamas's use of hesychastic vocabulary to describe the life of the Virgin, see J. Meyendorff, *Gregory Palamas*, tr. by G. Lawrence (London: Faith Press, 1964), p. 149, pp. 232–36. For an updated account of scholarship on Palamas, see R. Sinkewicz, 'Gregory Palamas', in C. G. Conticello and V. Conticello, *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, pp. 131–88.

belief supported by a well developed method of typological interpretation of the psalms. It is in her capacity as the 'Queen of Heaven' that she was also believed to act as the protector of Constantinople, the Queen of cities. One could amplify such illustrations almost ad infinity by extending the range to include not just texts from the whole of the scriptures, but also non-textual evidence such as icons, dedication of buildings, liturgical vestments, use of relics etc. My choice was governed by one particular detail which helps us trace the roots of this high tradition in the earlier periods.

B. I. a. The Key Role of Hymns to the Mother of God

What is interesting about Palamas' homilies is their special relationship to the theology of earlier hymns. In the introduction to his famous second 'Homily on the Entry', he gives us the exceptionally rare opportunity to hear a Byzantine preacher put himself in a clearly defined relation to earlier hymns; and significantly for our purpose these are hymns to the Theotokos:

I do not consider it necessary to make excuses to you who are around me for what will come later in my homily. You will easily forgive when you take everything into account: the speaker, the words, the extraordinary subject, and also the fact that each of you also needs everyone else's forgiveness when you compose various hymns to the Mother of God (h9ni/k' a@n th=| Qeoto/kw| ple/koite poiki/louj u3mnouj).

And, of course, many such hymns are written by you, because we are all obliged to pay this tribute to the Mother of God, as a community and as individuals, alone and in co-operation with others (suxnou\j de\ dh/pou ple/kete, pa&ntej olntej u9po/xrew| tau/thn e0ktinnu/nai th=| tou= Qeou= mhtri\ th\n ei0sfora&n, koinh=| te kai\ kaq' e3na pa&ntej, di' h9mw~n au0tw~n te kai\ a)llh/lwn).

But even as you attempt to render the praise you owe, still you realize that you are far from extolling her as is meet (u9mnei=n

pro\j a)ci/an). For that reason you also share the odes composed for her down through the ages (tai=j e0k tou= panto\j ai0w~noj u9pe\r tau/thj e0cenhnegme/naij koinwnou=ntej w)|dai=j), and continually, every day and hour, form an inspired, harmonious and ceaseless choir (e1nqeon kai\ e0mmelh= kai\ a!lhkton xorei/an) around the heavenly bridechamber.

Come then, holy company, hallowed audience, choir in harmony with the heavenly Spirit (xoro\j h9rmosme/noj ou0rani/w| Pneumatē), and assist me with this address, making it a joint effort, not just by listening attentively and directing your thoughts, but also by providing help through your sincere prayers, that the Word of the Father may join in from heaven with my words about His Mother, and grant that I may not strike a completely discordant note (panta&pasin a)pa&|donta), but rather produce something pleasing (e0narmo/nion) to the ears of God-loving people.²³

As an accomplished orator, Palamas begins by outlining the difficulty of his task and then proceeds to make the connection between homily and hymn, which is of interest to us. His aspiration as a preacher is clearly indicated: he believes that, ultimately, hymns are to be considered higher than homilies, and so his task as a preacher was to produce a song. He is both preaching on the songs his congregation knew well, and hoping that his own homily will rise up and be greeted by them as a new song. Palamas' words can be read as a reference to liturgical song, whether the one 'worthy hymn' of the Eucharist,²⁴ or the many hymns to the Mother of God understood precisely as the highest standard of theological reflection.

²³ Palamas, *Homily* 53.4. Greek text in P. K. Chrestou (ed.), *Grhgori/ou tou= Palama~ a#panta ta e1rga*, vol. 11 (Thessalonica: Paterikail\ 0Ekdo/seij Grhgo/rioj o9 Palama~j, 1986). English translation by C. Veniamin in Palamas, *Mary the Mother of God*, pp. 17–18.

²⁴ Consider the traditional opening words of the anaphora of St John Chrysostom where 'hymn' is placed as the first and this the worthiest of offerings: 11Acion kai\ di/kaion se\ u9mnei=n, se\ eu0logei=n, se\ ai0nei=n, soi\ eu0xaristei=n, se\ proskunei=n e0n panti\ to/pw| th=j despotei/aj sou. *The Divine Liturgy of Our*

This connection between the writing of theology and the composing of song was given a particularly concise expression in an anonymous hymn still used in the Byzantine rite for the feasts of great 'fathers' and 'teachers':

Let us sing the praise today of the Spirit's mystical trumpets – the God-bearing Fathers – who sang in the midst of the Church a harmonious song of theology: One unchangeable Trinity, nature and divinity...²⁵

Just like with Palamas, this anonymous composition envisions the theological task as including both preacher and audience, singing together a 'harmonious song'. In Palamas' case, such songs are the one thing worthy (αἰκίον) of God and, by extension of Mary the Theotokos, the one who 'bore God'. Thus, it is in the context of worship that theology acquires the confirmation of its genuineness. The singers of 'harmonious' songs are inspired by the Spirit. The gift of 'harmony' here is not primarily musical but doctrinal: they proclaim the 'one unchangeable Trinity' and the effect of their work is visible in the building of unity as they sing in 'the midst of the Church'. Conversely, those singing 'out of tune' are also those singing 'outside' of the church. They are, of course, the heretics, or the 'dividers' of doctrinal concord which alone serves as the basis of unity.²⁶

The idea that truth is found in unity understood as harmony is, of course, very ancient and certainly pre-Christian.²⁷ My reason for focusing on it is not because I

Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom, Greek text with an English translation, tr. by E. Lash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 31.

²⁵ Ta_j mustika_j sh/meron tou= Pneu/matoj sa&lpiggaj, tou\j qeoyo/rouj Pate/raj a)neufhmfh/swmen· tou\j melw|dh/santaj e0n me/sw|th=j 0Ekklhsi/aj, me/loj e0narmo/nion qeologi/aj, Tria&da mi/an a)para&llakton, ou0si/an te kai\ Qeo/thta. Doxastikon at Great Vespers for the feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom) on 29 January, in *Mhnai=on tou= 0Ianouari/ou* (Athens: Fos, 1987), p. 436. The same text is used for the commemoration of the Fathers of Nicaea on the Sunday before Pentecost, in *Penthkosta&riou* (Athens: Fos, 1988), p. 186.

²⁶ On how his image of patristic harmony is presented in the liturgical tradition via a unique set of 'hymns of hate' in which heresy is rejected, see Ephrem Lash, 'Byzantine Hymns of Hate', in A. Louth and A. Casiday (eds), *Byzantine Orthodoxies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 151–66.

²⁷ At least as old as Pythagoras and the ancient Greeks from whom it was received into mainstream European culture. John Strohmeier and Peter Westbrook, *Divine Harmony: The Life and Teachings of*

want to show that Palamas was an educated 'Hellene', which by the standards of his time he undoubtedly was. His discussion of harmony is important for us because it serves the purpose of introducing us to the unique way in which earlier hymns provide the background to the mature Byzantine homiletic tradition. We shall have another opportunity to return to this feature later on. For now it suffices to say that this important connection reveals the degree to which a preacher like Palamas could expect his audience to share in his rhetorical pursuits. Without giving any direct quotations, he appears confident that he can rely on previous knowledge of hymns to build his sermon. This connection points to the very interesting but still relatively little researched area of interdependence between hymns and homilies in the Byzantine tradition.²⁸ The clarification of the relationship between homilies and hymns, to which I now turn, is a task required for the fuller comprehension of the process by which Mary's exalted position became normative in later Byzantium.

A. II. The Middle Hymnic Tradition

If my argument so far is correct, what we should see in Palamas is the attempt of a preacher to turn the mind of his listeners to the hymns which they share together, the 'odes', as he says, 'composed for her down through the ages'. Among a potentially very long list of candidates for such hymnic influence behind Palamas' preaching, I will focus mainly on the eighth-century theologian and poet, John of Damascus, whose fame as writer of hymns was unparalleled in later Byzantium tradition.²⁹

Pythagoras (Berkeley: Pennsylvania State University, 2003). On God as 'Master of Song', see recently Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 79.

²⁸ My approach here is indebted to the contributions of Niki Tsironis who has argued for a hierarchy of genres where she sees a 'filtration process' occurring when a theme 'makes its first appearance in poetry, then passes over into iconography, and finally enters the liturgical life of the church'. N. Tsironis, 'From Poetry to Liturgy: the Cult of the Virgin in the Middle Byzantine Era', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God*, pp. 91–99 (91–92). See also Ead., 'Historicity and Poetry in Ninth-Century Homiletics: The Homilies of Patriarch Photios and George of Nicomedia', in Cunningham and Allen (eds), *Preacher and Audience*, pp. 295–316; Ead. 'The Mother of God in the Iconoclastic Controversy', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *The Mother of God*, pp. 27–39.

²⁹ His fame is rivalled only by that of his half-brother Cosmas, as the tenth-century encyclopaedia Suda testifies with a glowing entry: 'The lyrical canons of John and Cosmas have not received nor are likely

The link between Gregory Palamas and John Damascene becomes strikingly visible if one compares their respective homilies on the Dormition. We have already seen Palamas speaking of his inability to give an adequate praise for his chosen subject. John Damascene before him lays out exactly the same argument as a rhetorical excuse before the greatness of his task. Here is how he begins his second homily 'On the Holy and Glorious Dormition':

No human being can worthily praise the holy passing (e0kdhmi/an) of the Mother of God – not if he had ten thousand tongues and as many mouths!... It simply lies beyond the realm of oratory. But since God loves what we offer, out of longing and eagerness and good intentions, as best as we know how, and since what pleases her Son is also dear and delightful to God's Mother, come, let us again grope for words of praise. So we shall obey your orders, O excellent shepherds so beloved of God, as we invoke the help of the Word who became flesh from her, who fills every mouth that is open towards him (Ps 80[81]:11), and who is her only ornament, her perfect commendation. We know that when we begin to praise her, we are only paying what we owe, and that once we have offered this honor we become debtors again, so that our debt [of praise] always remains new, even when it has been discharged (w(j me/nein to\ xre/oj a)ei\ a)rxo/menon kai\ plhrou/menon). May she whom we celebrate be gracious to us – she who is above all creatures and reigns over all God's words as Mother of God...³⁰

to receive any comparison, as long as our life shall last'. Suda, Ἰωάννης, iota, 467 [online at: <http://www.stoa.org/sol/>]. On John's importance as a hymn writer, see recently Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 252–282. See also Afrodi/th Gkena&kou-Mporob/ilou, 0Epimerismoi\ kata_ stoixei=on grafika_ kai\ 0Iambikoi\ Kano/nej Xristouge/nnwn, Fw&tnw kai\ Penthkosth=j, *BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA*, 19 (2010), pp. 83–97.

³⁰ Greek text in P. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988), p. 516. Translation in B. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, p. 203. For the theological dimensions of John's treatment of this theme, see Louth, *St John Damascene*, pp. 153–61.

We have seen many of the themes in this passage reappearing in Palamas: beginning with the standard rhetorical amplification of the importance of the subject matter and moving to the idea that all Christians are in ever renewable 'debt', or *xre/oj*, however many praises they offer to the Mother of God. The human incapacity to offer fitting praise finds its only cure in the help which comes from God 'who fills every mouth that is open towards him'. This reference to the 'mouth' open before God comes from the psalms (Ps. 80[81]:11). It is used at the start of one of the long eighth-century poems, or canons, for the feast of the Annunciation. The canon is set as a dialogue between the Angel and the Theotokos and is based on the Gospel narrative. Here I will not attempt to resolve the question of authorship of this uniquely elaborate poetic composition which is still sung by those who follow the Byzantine rite today.³¹ Whichever the author – John Damascene or Cosmas of Maïuma – my argument is that we should be prepared to see the background to our second-millennium homilies in precisely such hymns.

This is the line I wish to take when looking for answers to questions like the one posed by Gregory Palamas, 'Is there anyone who is unaware that the Virgin Mother is both that bush and those tongs, which held the divine fire without being burnt?'³² What Palamas considers common knowledge here is the typological connection between Moses' vision of the burning bush and the birth of Christ from the Virgin. The link with earlier hymns which build on this typology becomes immediately visible if we compare Gregory's statement with the fourth ode in the Annunciation canon. The ode begins with the Theotokos asking the question, 'But I long to know how the nature of mortal men shall undergo union (*(a)na&krasin*) with the Godhead', to which the Angel replies as follows:

The bush that burned with fire

³¹ John's authorship is accepted in Nikodimos the Hagiorite's important commentary *9Eortodro/mion, hltoi e9rmhnei/a ei0j tou\j kano/naj tw~n despotikw~n kai\ geomhtorikw~n e9ortw~n* (Thessalonica: Kypseli, 1987) vol. 1, p. 383 (Venice original from 1836, p. 209). Louth is of the opinion that the dramatic canon belongs to the oeuvre of Cosmas of Maiuma, *St. John Damascene*, p. 255.

³² *Homily* 37.15: *Ti/j de\ ou0k oi]den, w(j h9 Parqenomh/twr e0kei/nh te h9 ba&toj kai\ au3th h9 labi/j e0stin, h9 to\ qei=on pu=r a)purpolh/twj sullabou=sa*; ET by C. Veniamin in Palamas, *Mary the Mother of God*, p. 76, see also p. 58 where Palamas makes the same point at the end of his homily 'On the Annunciation', *Homily* 14.14–15.

And yet remained unconsumed
 Disclosed the paradoxical mystery
 That shall come to pass in you.
 For after bearing child,
 You shall remain ever-virgin,
 O, Pure maiden, Full of grace.³³

The same connection between the Virgin and Moses' vision of the bush is made by Joseph the Hymnographer (810–886) from whom we have the largest collection of hymns in the Byzantine rite. In his *Canon of the Akathistos*, Joseph addresses the Virgin as the 'cause of joy' and asks her on behalf of all the faithful to 'endue our thoughts with grace that we may cry to you, "Hail, Bush unburned"'.³⁴

These examples should suffice to make it clear how I see the mechanism of orality working in Palamas' case. His allusions to earlier hymns illustrate how he as an orator seeks to build his argument on the prior knowledge of his audience. In terms of rhetorical theory, what Palamas is doing here is to draw on an *eíndocon*, that one thing all orators search to have in common with their audiences and which, as Aristotle noted, is used without spending time to explain it.³⁵ Of course, it is also possible that the typological connection between the Burning Bush and the Theotokos could have been known from learned treatises, like the fourth-century *Life of Moses* by Gregory of Nyssa where the connection is made explicit: 'From this [i.e. the bush] we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth'.³⁶ Later there appeared more

³³ 25 March, Matins Canon, Ode 4, *Mhnai=on tou= Marti/ou* (Athens: Fos, 1987), p. 206: *Katemh/nusen h9 ba&toj, a)kata&flektōj mei/nasa, decame/nh flo/ga, Kexaritwme/nh a)nu/mfeute, tou= kata_ se\ Musthri/ou to\ a)po/rrhton: meta_ to/kon ga&r, menei=j 9Agnh/, a)eipa&rqenoj*. Cited and discussed in M. Barker, *Great High Priest* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2003), pp. 258–61.

³⁴ *Canon of the Akathistos*, Ode 6, 4: *xai=re h9 a!flektōj ba&toj*, in *Triodion* (Athens: Fos, n.d.), p. 362.

³⁵ As explained by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, 1356b34: *ou0de\ h9 r9htorikh\ to\ kaq' e3kaston eíndocon qewrh/sei*.

³⁶ *Life of Moses*, Book 2, 21, in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*, translated by A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 59. The background of this interpretation is discussed in the notes on pp. 159–61.

homilies expounding on the same theme,³⁷ and yet Palamas' explicit reference to hymns points us in the direction of John of Damascus and his colleague poets as the more likely type of source behind the assumed common knowledge.

In a potentially very large field of references that could support this claim, let me now restrict the analysis to my key verses from psalm 44[45]. The Annunciation canon is unique in the way it uses this psalm in the troparia of the first ode. This hymn is important for our purpose the Marian typology in it corresponds exactly to the one we found in Palamas: The daughter addressed by David is again the Theotokos. Poetically, as with all canons, the individual troparia follow a metrical pattern established at the start (the so called *ei9rmo/j*, which in this case is *0Anoi/cw to\ sto/ma mou*, sung on the fourth tone). This pattern is then repeated line for line in exact numbers of syllables and accents in each of the subsequent troparia. I will discuss the troparia in my own translation in which I will seek to reproduce the metrical pattern of the original:³⁸

Narrator

0Anoi/cw to\ sto/ma mou
 kai\ plhrwqh/setai Pneu/matoj,
 kai\ lo/gon e0reu/comai,
 th=| Basili/di Mhtri/,
 kai\ o0fqh/somai,
 faidrw~j panhguri/zwn,
 kai\ a!|sw ghqo/menoj,
 tau/thj th/n Su/llhyin.

I will open my mouth in hope:

³⁷ The connection is explicit also in the first homily of Hesychius 'On Holy Mary the Theotokos', *Homily* 5.2, in M. Aubineau (ed.), *Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem*, vol. 1 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978), pp. 160–62. On the historical and theological context, see Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 132, n. 6.

³⁸ Brian Daley gives the metrical patterns in the second Appendix to his *On the Dormition*, p. 247. I have kept the syllabotonic pattern he gives but have modified the number of lines from five to eight to follow the musical divisions indicated by the commas in the Greek printed books. On John's mastery as a poet and writer of canons, see the final chapter in Louth, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 252–82.

May it be filled with the Spirit's grace
That praises may overflow
For the Mother and Queen.
And I will make a scene
In joyful celebration
And offer my merry song
For her Conception now.

Narrator

0A|de/tw soi De/spoina,
kinw~n th\ n lu/ran tou= Pneu/matoj,
Daui6d o9 Propa&twr sou:
1Akouson qu/gater,
th\ n xarmo/sunon,
fwnh\ n th\ n tou= 0Agge/lou:
xara_ n ga_ r mhnu/ei soi,
th\ n a) nekla&lhton.

Let David your forefather
Begin, O Lady, the song for you,
And moving his hands again
On the harp of the Spirit say:
'Listen daughter to
The glad voice of the Angel,
He brings you a message now:
Joy, which no speech can tell'.

The Angel

Bow~ soi ghqomenoj:
kli=non to\ ou]j sou kai\ pro/sxej moi,
Qeou= katagge/llonti,
su/llhyin a!sporon:
eu[rej xa&rin ga&r,
e0nw&pion Kuri/ou,

h4n eu[ren ou0de/pote,
a!llh tij Pa&nagne.

In gladness I cry to you:
Incline your ear, attend to me,
Conception as I now tell
– for God – but without a seed.
For you found the grace,
Before the Lord, O Most Pure,
As no woman ever had
Found before you today.

The Theotokos

Gnwsqh/tw moi lAggele,
tw~n sw~n r9hma&tw n h9 du/namij,
pw~j elstai o4 eilrhkaj;
le/ge safe/stata,
pw~j sullh/yomai,
Parqe/noj ou]sa Ko/rh;
pw~j de\ kai\ genh/somai,
Mh/thr tou= Kti/stou mou;

How powerful are your words,
I wish, O Angel, to understand.
How shall it be what you spoke?
Say it now clearly.
How shall I conceive,
unmarried girl and Virgin?
How also shall I give birth
and mother Him who created me?³⁹

³⁹ 25 March, Matins Canon, Ode 1, Greek text from *Mhnai=on tou= Marti/ou*, p. 205.

This hymn is a prime example of *prosopopoeia*, or 'speech in character'. The lines given by John Damascene to the Angel and the Theotokos abound with psalmic references and include psalm 44[45] whose typology is directed towards the Theotokos. The method of interpretation is identical to the one we know from Palamas. Both authors are interested in the twin questions of who is speaking in the psalm, and to whom the words are addressed. The chief objective of this way of interpretation is to establish the dramatic 'persona of the speaker'. The opening *ei9rmo/j* of the canon addresses the question of prophetic inspiration in a direct way: the poet identifies himself as the 'persona' who invokes the Spirit with 'open mouth', as in psalm 80[81]. Confident that his prayerful request will be granted, he then affirms his desire to 'make a scene' at the celebrations for the Virgin's conception. Like someone drunk with the wine of prophecy, he expects his 'merry song' to flow out of his mouth in a natural way (the reference to Psalm 44[45] is the verb 'to belch' but in the future tense: *e0reu/comai*).⁴⁰

The vivid image here is connected with the old theme of 'sober drunkenness', found for example in Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the 'cup' of Psalm 22[23].⁴¹ In contrast to the earlier tradition of inner mysticism, the poet sees himself as joining a communal celebration. His interpretation has a clear ecclesiological message: the Spirit's drink is best enjoyed when shared. The feast needs a company and the 'personae' the poet asks to join him are the prophet David, the Theotokos and the Archangel Gabriel. Their dialogue relies heavily on verses from the psalm. First, the king and prophet David is invited to begin by asking the daughter-Virgin to 'listen' to the Angel. This key verse is shared by David and the Angel who in the third troparion elaborates on the same exhortation: 'incline your ear', addressing the words to the

⁴⁰ See the rich 'Commentary on the Canon of the Annunciation' in Nikodimos, *9Eortodro/mion*, vol. 1, pp. 383–385 (Venice original from 1836, pp. 209–15). On the wider patristic context, see R. C. Hill, 'Psalm 45: A Locus Classicus for Patristic Thinking on Biblical Inspiration', *Studia Patristica*, 25 (1993), pp. 95–100.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles, Hom. 12, in H. Langerbeck (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 6 (Leiden, 1960), p. 362 (the term used is *nhfa&lloj me/qh*). For more references, see L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (eds), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, tr. by S. Cherney (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 686–87. Important discussion in H. Rahner's 1945 Erano lecture 'Earth Spirit and Divine Spirit in Patristic Theology', in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Spirit and Nature*, tr. by Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1954), pp. 122–48 (145–48). On the roots of the idea in Philo, see also in the same volume M. Pulver, 'The Experience of the Pneuma in Philo', pp. 120–21.

Virgin. In the rest of the canon, this dramatic structure forms the basis for a unique dialogue between the Theotokos and the Angel.

To summarize our findings so far, the contribution of John Damascene and his colleague poets consists of a dramatized reading, or re-enacting, of the psalm which serves to enhance the comprehension of the Incarnation as a central but ultimately incomprehensible event in sacred history. In turn, this is picked up by later preachers who use the earlier hymns in the development of their own homilies. Above all, what we are witnessing is the continuous working of a mechanism of orality, which builds on a common background in the liturgical use of the psalms and depends on a particular way of their dramatized interpretation.

B. II. a. The Contribution of Dramatized Exegesis

The dramatized method of exegesis is not unique to John Damascene. Here he stands in a well-established tradition flourishing among his eighth-century contemporaries among whom one could mention Germanos of Constantinople's dramatized *Homily on the Annunciation*.⁴² This hermeneutical tradition which asks of its practitioners to compose fictitious dialogues between the chief protagonists of a given story stretches back to earlier writers right through to the second-century apologists,⁴³ and from there to antiquity.⁴⁴ To say, however, that John is traditional and Palamas is simply following him is to miss the mark in our evaluation of the aspects of continuity and change involved in the process. Palamas is referring to earlier hymns, and John is composing a hymn using the psalms which were universally regarded as the hymn-book, and thus the teaching tool, of the early Church. The continuity is in the

⁴² Now available in English in M. Cunningham's translation in *Wider Than Heaven: Eighth-century Homilies on the Mother of God* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), pp. 221–46.

⁴³ See, for example, Melito's dialogues which intensify the presentation of the plague of the Egyptians, or Christ's final victory, in *Peri Pascha*, §§ 24–29 and 101–105. English translation by A. Stewart-Sykes in *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), pp. 43–44 and pp. 65–67.

⁴⁴ On the didactic role of hymns, see M. E. Gordley, *Teaching through Song in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

reference point which both authors share. The difference is in the way in which they appropriate their source: the one in song and the other in preaching.

The formative importance of the psalms in this regard is highlighted, among others, by Athanasius in his *Letter to Marcellinus*.⁴⁵ Further testimony is found in Chrysostom who presents the entire Christian population, of all ages and walks of life, joining in the singing of the psalms.⁴⁶ Basil of Caesarea's elucidation of the power of the psalmody evidently relies on a presumed regular use of and intimate familiarity with the psalms by the faithful who, as he says, 'chant them at home and in the market'.⁴⁷

We may infer, therefore, that, as in all times, the popularity of the psalms was facilitated by relatively easy-to-learn musical settings. A number of ecclesiastical writers openly admit that these settings connect them directly with the still flourishing tradition of the synagogue. Thus, Eric Werner has argued that the Christian use of the psalms in worship represents a unique point of liturgical continuity with Second Temple Judaism.⁴⁸ Chief among his sources is Eusebius who believed that the chanting of the Jewish Therapeuts was like the Psalmody in his own church. The chief description of the Therapeuts comes from Philo's *On the Contemplative Life* which the historian cites approvingly as part of his explicit agenda to establish a link between the ascetical practices in his own day and the tradition of the Therapeuts. One point of similarity, noted by Eusebius, concerned the practice of composing

⁴⁵ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, tr. by R. C. Gregg (London: SPCK, 1980), p. 102: 'Yet, the Book of the Psalms is like a garden (παράδεισος) containing things of all these kinds [i.e. of the other books of scripture – KB], and it sets them to music, but also exhibits things of its own that it gives in song along with them'. Greek text in *PG* 27:12C.

⁴⁶ Chrysostom, 'On Psalm 150', *PG* 55:498: α#pantaj tou\j th\n oi0koume/nhn oi0kou=ntaj.

⁴⁷ Basil, 'On Psalm 1', *PG* 29b:212C.

⁴⁸ See his 'Notes on the Attitude of the Early church Fathers Towards Hebrew Psalmody', in E. Ferguson (ed.), *Worship in Early Christianity* (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 345: 'It is psalmody and its music which provides the most important link between the Jewish and Christian liturgies'. Another learned authority on the subject has also argued that 'an uninterrupted liturgical tradition existed from the days of the synagogue to the Byzantine melodies of the mid seventh century, according to which the reading of the Scriptures was followed by the recitation or chanting of a poetical homily', E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), p. 11. This section was updated with more examples in the second edition of Wellesz's monograph in 1961, p. 186.

elaborate hymns to be chanted by the men and women of the community at the vigils for the great feasts. The responsorial performance of these hymns is indicated in Eusebius' clarification that the rest of the faithful also participated in the worship listening to the main chanter and then joining in for the refrains.⁴⁹

Of course, this kind of worship was not restricted to Greek speaking believers alone. In the Latin speaking world, Augustine's account of the 'antiphonal' singing adopted by the church in Milan 'after the manner of the Eastern Church'⁵⁰ is a well-known but by no means unique witness to what has been described as a 'psalmodic movement' in early Christianity.⁵¹ Augustine even complained that the beauty of the singing of the psalms was distracting him and that he was 'giving them more respect than is fitting'.⁵² In the male dominated culture of late-antiquity, it is striking to hear Ambrose advocating that women be permitted to chant the psalms (probably in a separate choir antiphonally with the men of the community).⁵³ On the role of women in psalmody, there is also the important witness of Jerome's devote follower, St Paula, who had joined him in Palestine and had acquired such command of Hebrew that she was able to chant the psalms in the original.⁵⁴ One way of construing Jerome's testimony would be to say that Paula learned Hebrew by chanting the psalms. This is, after all, how a language has always been passed to the next generation: first through song and poetry, and then through narrative and argument. In a culture dominated by oral communication, therefore, the psalms provided the first and most direct contact with the faith of the community.⁵⁵ People would start learning about the faith from the

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.17.22: οἱ ἄλλοι τοῦ καὶ ἡσυχία/ἀνὰ κροῦσιν αὐτὴν ὡς ἡμεῖς ἐκτελέσμεν, in G. Bardy (ed.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 1, Sources chrétiennes 31 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1952), p. 77.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.7.15, ET in *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, tr. by A. C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955; repr. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2002), p. 157.

⁵¹ As described by J. McKinnon, and recently analysed by A. Lingas in his 'Medieval Byzantine Chant and the Sound of Orthodoxy', in Louth, *Byzantine Orthodoxies*, pp. 141–42.

⁵² Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.33.49 (Outler, p. 200).

⁵³ Ambrose, 'On Psalm 1', Pref. 9, *PL* 14:925A.

⁵⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 108, 26: 'discere uoluit et consecuta est ita, ut Psalmos hebraice caneret et sermonem absque ulla Latinae linguae proprietate resonaret', in I. Hilbert (ed.), CSEL, vol. 55 (Lipsiae: G. Freytag, 1912), p. 345.

⁵⁵ We can see the cross-cultural vitality of this tradition on the example of Tsarist Russia where the traditional *bukvar* system of primary education relied heavily on the memorisation of the psalms in the

psalms which in turn would require the community to engage in a continuous and focused effort to read the faith in, and from, the singing of the psalms. What emerges clearly from these testimonies is that it was not simply the words of the psalm but their melodious rendition and the antiphonal singing which produced the desired effects. 'A chanted psalm shears away despondency', is how in the early fifth century Proclus of Constantinople summarized the belief in the power of the psalms.⁵⁶

To extract this power, a person chanting a psalm would look for the change (metabolh/) in the person of the speaker occurring in the text.⁵⁷ The terminology used here is one familiar from ancient Greek drama. This dramatic interpretation of the psalms, which first appeared in commentaries and then in homilies, was eventually set to song by John Damascene and his colleague poets, serving as the background for later preachers like Palamas who aspired to turn their homily into song, or psalm. As we are examining a process which took more than a millennium to complete, it is important to emphasize again the familiarity of different audiences across time and space with the book of the psalms in particular, more than with any other scripture. Confident in the previous knowledge on the part of their audience both of the psalms as texts, and of the traditional dramatic way of their interpretation, preachers and hymn writers alike were assured that a particular take on a well-known verse will be understood.

Drawing these arguments together, we can say that John Damascene's dramatized way of using psalm 44[45] provides a key element of continuity which in turn assures minimal friction at the points where we see variations introduced. It is clear that his canon serves a double function, both entertaining and educating the

old Slavonic language. The first changes to this pedagogy came with the reforms under Peter the Great, see J. Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 238.

⁵⁶ Proclus, *Homily* 2.1: yalmo\j ga_r melodou/menoi e0kte/mnei a)qumi/aj, discussed in N. Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 164, p. 180.

⁵⁷ As recorded in the anonymous commentary attributed to Origen. *Selecta in Psalmos*. PG 12:1101A: metabolh/ tou legontoj, and 1072B: pros w&pou metabolh. Whichever way one wishes to resolve the problem of authorship for this particular commentary, the dramatized exegesis remains of key importance both for Greek tradition as a whole and for Origen in particular who first articulates its principles in the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. On the 'persona of the speaker', see B. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Basel: F. Reinhardt, 1987), pp. 263–76.

audience. Taking a stance of 'originality' in the context of this 'tradition', John has contributed an original poetic form which allows for the individual troparia to be chanted antiphonally by two opposite choirs each taking a role in the exchange between the Angel and the Theotokos.⁵⁸ Nevertheless this new development stands in clear continuity with the traditional antiphonal singing of the psalms and the established dramatized way of their interpretation.⁵⁹ We can see how this approach would facilitate the involvement of the audience in the celebration, thus making the message more easily comprehensible to the larger population whose level of education would have been significantly lower than that of their preacher.⁶⁰ Having emphasized continuity, it is time we turn our attention to the element of change in this evolution.

A. III. The Earlier Tradition

We began our study with an analysis of fourteenth-century homilies on the Virgin. The aim of my argument was to establish the presence of what I have called a mechanism of orality in the development of the veneration of the Theotokos in Byzantium. To demonstrate this I looked at the basis of the later homilies in earlier eighth- and ninth-century hymns. In this final section, my focus will be on an even earlier layer of exegetical and homiletic traditions. Gathering evidence from the works mainly fourth- and fifth-century writers, I will seek to establish the point at which a

⁵⁸ As the festal canons are still chanted during matins on Mt Athos in Greece.

⁵⁹ An illustrious precedent here is set by the famous *kontakia* of Romanos the Melodist in the sixth century. For his 'Mary at the Cross' which is set almost completely in dialogue, see P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis (eds), *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), pp. 142–49. English translation in R. J. Schork, *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 106–14.

⁶⁰ Here I follow the conclusion of Jan Barkhuizen who has argued for a 'lively' connection between preachers and their audiences, 'Proclus of Constantinople: A Popular Preacher in Fifth-Century Constantinople', in Cunningham and Allen (eds), *Preacher and Audience*, pp. 179–200 (192). For a comparison with Chrysostom, which argues the same point regarding the success of Proclus' dramatized way of preaching, see M. Cunningham, 'Preaching and the Community', in R. Morris (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium* (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 1990), pp. 29–47 (32–36).

decisive change occurred in the tradition. As Nicholas Conostas has argued,⁶¹ Proclus of Constantinople occupies a central position in the list of key fifth-century authors. Thus, it is appropriate to begin with a brief review of his unique contribution.

Proclus' position is summarized in his statement that, 'the entire miracle of the Virgin birth is hidden in the shadows'.⁶² Here we note two important moments. First, we see a preacher eagerly affirming that the 'entire miracle' is accessible to those who believe, and then restricting access to that miracle by claiming that it is 'hidden in the shadows'. The second point is expressed via the key notion of 'shadow' (as in Hebrews 10), by which Proclus designates the typological dimension of the Old Testament. This approach is strikingly visible already in the opening lines of his First Homily:

Today the holy Mother of God and Virgin Mary has gathered us here. She is the spotless treasure of virginity, the spiritual paradise of the second Adam, the workshop where the two natures were united, This is the feast of the exchange that brought salvation, and she is the palace where the Logos wedded our flesh, she is the bush with human soul, not consumed by the terrible fire of divinity, she is indeed the swift cloud (Isaiah. 19.1) which carried in the body the One who is above the Cherubim. Maria, the slave and mother, the virgin and heaven, the only bridge for God to reach humankind...⁶³

The fact that the Old Testament typologies listed here were to become a determining feature for all later preachers is a testimony to Proclus' homiletic genius. His achievement has been described as 'stunningly innovative' and assessed as provoking 'euphoric reactions' on the part of his audience.⁶⁴ His rhetorical training notwithstanding, Proclus' secret to popularity must also be sought in his ability to discover the 'entire mystery' hidden 'in shadows'. Here is the justification of his own work as preacher: the 'shadows' are the Old Testament scriptures from which his perceptible eye was able to extract fresh and original interpretations.

⁶¹ N. Conostas, 'Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3 (1995), pp. 169–94.

⁶² *Homily* 2.9: Βλε/πε ο4λον το\ παργενικο\ν γαυ=μα skiagrafou/meon, in Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 172.

⁶³ *Homily* 1.1, in Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 133.

A unique example of such a new interpretation is found in the concluding sections of Proclus' second homily on the Nativity where he comments Zechariah's vision of the lampstand (Zech. 4:4):

Who is this lampstand? It is holy Mary (Ti/j h9 luxni/a; h9 a(gi/a Mari/a). Why a lampstand? Because she bore the immaterial light made flesh. And why (is the lampstand) all of gold? Because she remained a virgin even after giving birth. And just as the lampstand is not itself the source of the light but the vehicle of the light, so too, the Virgin is not herself God, but God's temple.⁶⁵

How new was this interpretation? Nicholas Constas affirms Proclus' originality with a reference to all his predecessors claiming that he 'exhibits no real dependency on any of them'.⁶⁶ This is argued on the basis of Proclus' unique Marian reading of the passage. Thus far the observation is correct but the notion of dependency can have a further meaning. The question that emerges with regard to Proclus is whether he was original in the *collection* of the scriptural types or in their *interpretation*. It seems to me that the exclusive focus on his original interpretation has left the problem of collecting the types out of focus. Are we to imagine Proclus as someone with whom the Mariological tradition begins, as it were, from point zero, and to whose industry and insight we owe the compilation of the entire vast collection of types? This is clearly not the case for, just like everyone else in this story, Proclus also stands in a long tradition. To assess his role, let us look at one other interpretation of Zechariah's vision. In the understanding of his contemporary, Cyril of Alexandria,⁶⁷ it is the church which is 'hidden' in the type of the prophetic lampstand. As in Proclus, it is

⁶⁵ *Homily* 2.10, in Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 175 (modified).

⁶⁶ Constas refers to the list provided by Doutreleau (Hyppolytus, Origen, Didymus, Cyril of Alexandria, Ephrem, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrrhus) to which he also adds a reference to Methodius of Olympus's *Symposium*, 10.6. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, p. 190.

⁶⁷ *In Zach.* 2.4: th\ n ga&r toi luxni/an th\ n xrush=n famen eilnai pa&lin th\ n 0Ekkhlhsi/an, w(j tetimhme/nhn e0n ko/smw|, w(j diafanesta&thn e0n a)retai=j, w(j u9you= dh\ li/an h0rme/nhn toi=j th=j a)lhqou=j qeognwsi/aj do/gmasin, e0f' h[| to\ lampa&dion, toute/sti Xristo\j, in P. E. Pusey (ed.), *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in xii prophetas*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1868), p. 330. Discussed in M. Simonetti, 'Note sul commento di Cirillo d'Alessandria ai *Profeti minori*', *Vetera Christianorum* 14 (1977), pp. 301–30. I am grateful to my Durham colleague Dr Matthew Crawford for sharing his copy of this article with me.

Christ who is the light shining over the church whose seven lights are the apostles, evangelists and teachers. For Proclus the seven lights are the seven laws fulfilled in Christ. Proclus also sees the seven conduits as the gifts of the Spirit, whereas for Cyril they conduits represent the assembly of all the faithful. The two olive trees are evergreen for Proclus, because, just as the Old and the New Testaments they continuously give witness to Christ. For Cyril, they are the Jews and the Gentiles brought into unity under the light of Christ.

The two versions display marked differences but also some similarities. My reason for contrasting them is not because I wish to challenge Proclus' originality. The purpose here is to highlight the existence of the type itself as material readily available for preachers to engage with it. If Leena Peltomaa is correct in seeing that veritable cathedral of Marian devotion in sound, the Akathistos Hymn,⁶⁸ as the product of the age of Proclus, then we have to ask ourselves with what materials it was built. The sheer scale of hermeneutical effort involved demands a more nuanced assessment of Proclus' relationship to his predecessors. The significance of this observation becomes clear when we relate it to the speed with which Mariological interpretations emerged and came to dominate the hermeneutical space populated by the types.

Before we focus on this important question of 'speed' in the development, however, let us return once more to the images of 'daughter' and 'queen' from Psalm 44[45]. These are absent from Proclus (and from the Akathistos hymn). Yet the earlier fourth-century tradition gives an important witness to an ecclesial reading of the types, similar in intent to what we observed in Cyril's interpretation of the prophetic Lampstand. Thus, in contrast to both John Damascene and Gregory Palamas, Basil the Great identifies the 'daughter' of the psalm as the Church:

He is addressing the Church (proskalei=taith\ n 0Ekkhlhsi/an) to listen and to keep what is commanded.

Incline, he says, your ear. Do not run again to the outside myths but

⁶⁸ Peltomaa, *Akathistos Hymn*, pp. 107–12. This thesis is reviewed and contested by N. Constatas who rejects a composition before Chalcedon but is prepared to accept a date 'possibly toward the close of the fifth century', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 49/3 (2005), pp. 355–58 (356).

accept the humble sound (to\ tapeino/n) of the words in the gospels. Incline your ear to the teaching offered here.⁶⁹

The main difference between this passage and the ones we examined earlier is in the identification of the addressee with the Church who is the 'daughter' invited to listen. The problem which the author tries to solve has to do with the 'humble sound' of the Scriptures in comparison with the shiny rhetoric of Ancient Greek literary culture. Basil the Great interprets the psalm with a reference to the full conversion expected of each and every believer, and thus of the Church as a whole, which is asked to abandon the 'old myths' and turn to the gospel of Christ. Diodore of Tarsus offers identical interpretation. For him the verse 'clad in garment of cold, of a rich variety' means the 'manifold graces of the church' whom the prophet David personally exhorts with the words 'Listen daughter'.⁷⁰ The overall message is one of repentance: the fulfilment of the church's vocation is conditioned on the rejection of idolatry. In the anonymous commentary attributed to Origen it is again the church which is asked by the Father to 'incline her ear and to listen'.⁷¹

John Chrysostom, Proclus' illustrious predecessor, develops further the theme of the Church's obedience. His understanding of our key verses applied to the Church is

⁶⁹ Basil, 'On Psalm 44', *PG* 29:408C–412D.

⁷⁰ Diodore, 'Psalm 44', in R. C. Hill (tr.), *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1–51* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2005), p. 146–47. Greek text in J.-M. Olivier (ed.), *Diodori Tarsensis commentarii in psalmos. I: Commentarii in psalmos I–L*, vol. 1. Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), p. 274: To\ de\ «i9matismw~| diaxru/sw| peribebhlme/nh, pepoikilme/nh» ta_ poiki/la le/gei xari/smata th=j e0kklhsi/aj... lAkouson, qu/gater, kai\ ilde kai\ kli=non to\ ouj j sou. Au0to\j o9 Dauei\d parainei= th=| e0kklhsi/a|.

⁷¹ *PG* 12:1432B: «kli=non to\ ouj j sou», pro\j th\n 0Ekkhlhsi/an fhsi\n o Path/r. Outside of the Christian tradition, this identification of listening with the call to conversion can be traced to Philo who interpreted Abraham's abandonment of his fatherland as the soul's rejection of the old, i.e. pagan myths. *Legum allegoriarum*, 2.59: xitw~nej d'ei0si\ ta_ me/rh tou= a)lo/gou, a\$ to\ logiko\n e0peski/aze. kai\ 0Abraa_m gumnou=tai, o3tan a)kou/sh| : «elcelqe e0k th=j gh=j sou kai\ e0k th=j suggenei/aj sou» (Gen. 12.1). See also the similar motive in *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, 5. Greek text in L. Cohn (ed.), *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Reimer, 1896; repr. De Gruyter, 1962).

directly connected with the incarnation, in which Christ 'the king' of the Church was seen in the humble form of a servant:

'The queen stood on thy right hand.' The queen? How did she [sc. the Church] who was down-trodden and poor become a queen? and where did she ascend? The queen herself stood on high by the side of the king. How? Because the king became a servant; He was not that by nature, but He became so.⁷²

Chrysostom sees the 'queen' of the psalm standing to the 'right hand' of Christ who through the incarnation has elevated the Church from her low status. Chrysostom's interest here is in highlighting the progression from the 'down-trodden and poor' church of the Old Testament to that of an exalted 'queen' in the New. Chrysostom takes this reading even further by applying a host of other scriptural titles:

For observe the Church, how she is sometimes a bride, sometimes a daughter, sometimes a virgin, sometimes a bondmaid, sometimes a queen, sometimes a barren woman, sometimes a mountain, sometimes a garden, sometimes fruitful in children, sometimes a lily, sometimes a fountain: She is all things.⁷³

What we are given here is a collection of images which the later tradition would use for the Mother of God. This will begin with Chrysostom's successor on the throne of Constantinople just three decades later. Yet, what we saw in Proclus is wholly absent from Chrysostom's exegetical horizon where all these images, or types, are seen as references to the Church:

Do not stray away from the Church; for nothing is stronger than the Church. The Church is your hope, your salvation, your refuge. The Church is higher than the heaven, it is wider than the earth. It never

⁷² Chrysostom, 'On Eutropius', *Homily* 2.6, *PG* 52:402. On the question of authenticity of this homily, see Alan Cameron, 'A Misidentified Homily of Chrysostom', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 32 (1988), pp. 34–48. I follow W. Mayer's judgement in her 'John Chrysostom on Poverty', in P. Allen, B. Neil and W. Mayer (eds), *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009), p. 104, n. 223: 'Even if is inauthentic, it nonetheless refers to real events and is consistent with John's discourse'. See also Ead. 'John Chrysostom', in Cunningham and Allen (eds), *Preacher and Audience*, p. 108.

⁷³ Chrysostom, 'On Eutropius', *Homily* 2.6, *PG* 52:402.

waxes old, but is always in full vigour. Wherefore as significant of its solidity and stability Holy Scripture calls it a mountain: or of its purity a virgin, or of its magnificence a queen; or of its relationship to God a daughter; and to express its productiveness it calls her barren who has borne seven: in fact it employs a myriad of names (*myriada* *onoma*) to represent her nobleness.⁷⁴

Apart from the familiar by now images of queen and daughter, we have here a 'myriad' of other names to represent, as Chrysostom put it, the 'nobleness' of the Church. Thus, we can speak of an established earlier tradition of ecclesial reading of the types which after Proclus were to receive a new Marian orientation. This ecclesiological approach forms one of the earliest layers of Christian reflection on the meaning of Psalm 44[45].

B. III. a. Original Multiplicity

The claim for the pre-eminence of the ecclesial reading holds true for the majority of authors with one notable exception: Athanasius of Alexandria. In his *Letter to Marcellinus*, Athanasius gives an early witness to a Marian reading of our key verse where he connects the verse from the psalm 'Hear, O daughter' with Archangel Gabriel's salutation 'Hail, O favored one':

'Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your year; forget also your people and your father's house, because the King has desired your beauty'. Again, this is like that which is said by Gabriel, 'Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' For indeed, having stated that he is Christ, soon thereafter it [sc. the Psalter] made known the human birth from the virgin in saying, 'Hear O daughter'. Take note that Gabriel calls Mary by name, since he is dissimilar to her in terms of origination, but David the Psalmist properly addresses her as 'daughter', because she happened to be from his seed.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus*, 6 (reference to Lk 1, 28), *PG* 27:16BC: *Ὁ Ἰδεῖς ὅτι μετὰ τὴν Γαβριὴλ ἐκ τῆς παρθένου καλεῖται Μαριάν, ἐκ τῆς ὧν αὐτὴ ἐγενήθη ἐκ τοῦ Δαβὶδ ἐκ τῆς σπέρματος αὐτοῦ τὴν γενεάν.*

This Athanasian passage stands at the opposite end to the ones from Cabasilas and Palamas with which I began. At both ends we have a Marian reading of the key verse of psalm 44[45]. The difference we observe between the fourth and the fourteenth century is one of multiplication and dislocation of hermeneutical layers as part of the mechanism of orality which I have analyzed. In this context, my argument needs an important qualification: we must not assume a radical change in the sense of something completely new emerging in the fifth century. The Marian reading of psalm 44[45] in Athanasius' *Letter to Marcellinus* is of crucial importance here showing that there had been in existence, already before the fifth century, some well-defined elements which were designed to form the later tradition. The same applies for Cyril's reading of the Lampstand of Zacharias. In the case of Athanasius, we have a clear identification of the Virgin Mary with an Old Testament type; in the case of Cyril, we have the construction of an ecclesial type which will later become an integral part of the new Marian typology.

A further witness to the simultaneous presence of the two layers in the earlier tradition is the *Protevangelium of James*, where, as Andrew Louth has noted, the purity of the young Virgin is presented in parallel to the sanctity of the Temple.⁷⁶ The connection is made explicit in the detail of the second apparition of the angel: their first meeting at the well has ended with the frightened Virgin running home where she continues her work spinning the scarlet and purple cloth for the veil of the Temple. And it is at this point, while she is working for the Temple, that the Annunciation and with it the Incarnation take place, followed by an explanation by the angel of the miraculous manner of Mary's conception. What we see here, therefore, is the Marian and the ecclesial threads literally woven together. The knot which they form provides

au0th\ n ei0ko/twj qugate/ra prosfwnei= tau/thn. ET in Athanasius, *Life of Antony and Letter to Marcellinus*, pp. 104–105.

⁷⁶ Louth, 'John of Damascus on the Mother of God as a Link between Humanity and God', p. 156. É. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961), §23: Kai\ e1ntromoj genome/nh ei0sh/|ei ei0j to\n oi]kon au0th=j kai\ a)napau/sasa th\n ka&lpin ellaben th\n porfu/ran kai\ e0ka&qisen e0pi\ tou= qro/nou kai\ h[lken th\n porfu/ran. Kai\ i0dou\ elsth a!ggeloj e0nw&pion <au0th=j> le/gwn. Mh\ fobou=, Mari/a... The claim of James the narrator to be writing from Jerusalem is significant again because of the city's connection with the Temple, Ibid. §49.

the starting point from which the whole story is presented. Thus we can conclude that the difference between the earliest and the later layers is in the progressive flattening and the homogenisation of an earlier multiplicity.

A. Conclusion

The idea which I have presented in this paper was born as a quiet but persistent reflection amidst the noisy experience of regular worship in a Greek Orthodox Church. Anyone familiar with this tradition would know of the ubiquitous presence of the Theotokos there. It is in fact very probable that 'de Maria numquam satis' is a more fitting descriptor for the Orthodox veneration of Mary than it is for any other tradition for there is simply no church building or liturgical office which does not commemorate her.⁷⁷ Yet, the immersion of a foreigner in the deep waters of Greek Orthodoxy is a slow process. One hears and sees things repeated many times, often standing for hours in a dark church, and without a book. The still predominantly oral acquaintance with this tradition has conditioned my reflection on it as well. In particular, this applies to my argument for the existence of superimposed layers of orality in it. What I mean by layers here is perhaps best illustrated with the way Orthodox clergy wear their vestments in a layered fashion, one on top of the other, or the way they are still expected to say some of the most important prayers 'mystically' (or 'quietly') while the choir sings the appointed psalm or hymn. If one stands in the sanctuary, or if the church has microphones, what is heard is both the voice of the priest and that of the singers precisely as overlapping layers of sound.⁷⁸

The fascinating discussion on vestments and sounds is here left for another occasion. In this paper I have focused only on written texts. However, my approach to them was geared towards understanding how they would function as layers in the context of oral communication. This preoccupation conditioned my approach which started by removing the second millennium layers to see what is beneath them. Thus,

⁷⁷ I once heard at a meeting with a Roman Catholic group in Durham that in one of their churches Marian hymns are sometimes 'optional'. This is never possible in Orthodox worship. On the contrary, one regularly has at least several hymns; the option is simply whether the bells should ring or not during the main one!

⁷⁸ I am grateful to Timothy Carroll, doctoral student at UCL London, whose ethnographic perspective enriched so much our discussion on the points raised in this paragraph.

the first part of the paper sought to demonstrate how the Marian homilies of the mature tradition can be related to the hymns of the middle tradition. Gregory Palamas' explicit reference to earlier hymns offered the key to unlocking this dynamic. As I argued in the second part of the paper, the parallels between Palamas and John of Damascus are so close as to allow us to postulate a direct relationship of dependence, with the later homilies mirroring the uniquely exalted position of the Virgin in the hymns. Given the brevity of the New Testament witness, it was the Old Testament which provided the required volume of scriptural support. Thus, in order to give coherence to my argument and to avoid the sense of almost random leaps across centuries, I focused on psalm 44[45] and on the practice of its dramatized interpretation as stable components against which to record variations.

The most significant variation was discussed in the third part of the paper. Here, I focused on the types which for John Chrysostom pointed to the Church but for his successor Proclus a couple of decades later equally clearly pointed to Mary, the Mother of God. This change of hermeneutical addressee was absolute in the sense that never again did the application of the types revert back to the Church: Mary had completely supplanted the Church at the centre of the symbolic system. In this way the earlier ecclesiological and Marian layers which we had observed in parallel when comparing Basil, Chrysostom and Athanasius became no longer visible.

There are two aspects about this process which excite further interest and beg an explanation. First is the speed with which the change is effected. Second is the completeness and irreversibility of the process. As to the first of these, the reason behind the astonishing speed of the change is the existence by the end of the fourth century of an established collection of typological references. In other words, the hermeneutical process whereby the Church had attracted the symbolism of the Old Testament should be considered to have reached its completion before the age of Proclus. We have seen this working with the established ecclesial type of the prophetic lamp of Zecharias used in a new way by Proclus. The same applies to the images of daughter and queen from Psalm 44[45] as well as to the other 'myriad of names' selected by Chrysostom. In this paper, my coverage of the evidence is not exhaustive as I have no space to list and analyze all possible sources. Despite this limitation, what I hope to have achieved is to have demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between originality in offering a new interpretation of a given type, and the original effort involved in identifying the type in the first place. If Proclus

deserves credit for the former, the latter was the work of a much earlier group of ecclesiastical teachers some going back to the second century. Like everyone else in this story, therefore, Proclus is also to be included in the mechanism of orality which had already put together a vast collection of types.

We may now legitimately ask in what form this collection had existed. So far, my argument leads to the conclusion that we are dealing with an oral tradition which may or may not have found a concrete expression in a single written text. Here I find illuminating the parallel with the thesis of C.H. Dodd who had isolated key OT passages that according to him had exercised significant influence on Jesus and his followers (Is. 53, Ps. 68[69], Dan. 7 etc.):

I am not thinking of a book at all, but rather of something belonging to the body of instruction imparted orally in the main, no doubt, to those whose duties in the church led them to O.T. research; a sort of guide to the study of the Bible for Christian teachers.⁷⁹

If the parallel is not too far-fetched, the availability of a similar kind of oral instruction in the fourth and the fifth century would mean that, when the moment was ripe, the collection of ecclesiological types could be transferred 'lock-stock-and-barrel' to a new addressee. The definition of the Council of Ephesus was surely the catalysing factor. The council was held in 431 and its influence determined the universal acceptance of Mary's title as Theotokos. We know how controversial this was from the exchanges between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople prior to the council. During the troublesome years after the council, the rising popularity of Proclus's homilies must have played a key role in securing the acceptance of the title. In the ancient world conciliar decisions alone carried little authority until they had stood the test of the corroborative approval of the wider church and the imperial authorities. And here was the chief contribution of the preacher and the hymn writer of later centuries who carried the decision of the council to the minds and hearts of the people and thus secured a favourable reception.

As to the second final point, which is to say the fact that the Mother of God completely ousted the Church from the focal position in the symbolic world of later Byzantine hermeneutics, again interesting avenues of exploration open up. It is

⁷⁹ C. H. Dodd, *The Old Testament in the New* (London: Athlone Press, 1952), pp. 8-9. S. Witmer, *Divine Instruction in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), p. 183.

possible that the explanation is similar to the first: Proclus' homilies facilitate the dissemination of the title Theotokos and contribute to the elucidation of the theology which supports it. His message is in turn confirmed and disseminated by subsequent hymn writers who rely on earlier homilies. And finally by a process of reinforcement and exponential growth, from around the turn of the second millennium, these hymns themselves generate new homilies on the Mother of God, among them the homilies of Cabasilas and Palamas from which we quoted at the beginning of this essay. Once in the second millennium, we notice a change in the new prominence given to liturgical song. We observed this development with striking clarity in Palamas. However, it can also be seen in earlier writers like Peter of Damascus whose meditations contain lengthy verbatim quotations from the hymns for Holy Week and from other liturgical services.⁸⁰ In both, the hymnic references are meshed into their texts in a way which suggests that their authors are quoting from memory. Palamas in particular was explicit in voicing his expectation that his audience will be able to recall the hymns which he considered important as illustrations to his sermons. What connects all these layers in the tradition, and also keeps together the different parts of my paper, is the element of dramatization in the reading of the verses of Psalm 44[45]. We have seen the continuing application of this dramatic device in different genres: from Biblical exegesis, through homilies to hymns, and then again in later homilies. The liturgical echoes between these different layers form the mechanism of orality which makes the long tradition of Marian veneration in Byzantium a little more comprehensible and also invites us to appreciate the continuous effort of those who relied on these echoes to keep their audiences moved, entertained and educated.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Peter of Damascus, 'The Third Stage of Contemplation', in *Philokalia*, translated from the Greek and edited by G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard and K. Ware, vol. 3 (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), pp. 116–19. Discussed in K. Banev, 'The Ecclesiology of the Philokalia', in B. Bingaman and B. Nassif (eds), *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 163–74 (170–71).

⁸¹ Mr Francis Garcia's historical acumen and brotherly patience were invaluable for the initial shaping of this text. Dr Avril Pyman's hospitality made possible its completion. To both I am profoundly grateful.